



The Insider

www.senate.mi.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

July 22, 2005

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

Mickey's Letter Bag: Cool Cities

Dear Senator Switalski:

I would like to respond to the "cool cities" initiative announced by Gov. Granholm.

The "cool cities" concept is with good intention. However, it falls short and fails to address the bigger problems on why folks are moving out of the state.

The "cool cities" monies should be spent on a state and/or regional commission to do a thorough study on this exodus of youth and talent. It should expand the study to understand what the major competing cities have that are attracting people from places like Michigan.

Kids are not moving from Troy to Traverse City, from Detroit to Novi, from Jackson to Sterling Heights, kids are moving out of state. My guess is they are moving to cities that have common infrastructures, dependable and affordable mass transit, solid entertainment base of restaurants, museums, sporting events, diverse cultural communities and quality education systems.

Before we start handing out \$15,000 grants to cities, we need to develop a solid short term, mid-term and long term plan with goals and implementation strategies for competing with Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Cleveland, etc.

Timothy Nowell
Sterling Heights

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Dear Sen. Switalski:

Once again, I am writing to tell you what I think. This is in response to the July 8th Edition of the insider. I would first like to quote one of your questions:

"What is cool?"

And here in I believe lies one of many problems with this infamous initiative. There is not one definition of cool in any realm of life, from fashion, to T.V., and yes, even cities. I don't think it is up to the Legislature to decide what is cool. Let the constituents decide by moving where we want to move.

Now, I am definitely in favor of the promotion of vibrant economic centers, as Michigan is truly in need of some. However, throwing money at the cause I don't think will help, nor is helping. I also think that downtowns and "hip areas" come from the bottom up, not the government marking off a "cool area". Take West Willis Village in Detroit, for example. It all started with a bakery and, by word of mouth business, has grown into a strip of progressive stores, everything from fair trade clothing to an organic grocery store, with studio apartments topping the buildings. The state government didn't decide that Ferndale, or Royal Oak, or Ann Arbor would be cool (or throw money at them) before they became the hot spots for young professionals, why should they start now?

I also would like to know how anyone is justifying spending this money when the state's economic situation doesn't seem to be getting any better. Spend the money on necessities, not luxuries like cool cities. I hate to say it but Utica being cool will not help retain or bring in people from other states. People want secure jobs, or a good education, or a relatively stable state government before they want, or can afford "cool".

Thank you again for reading, and for your newsletter.

Tracy Kerchkof
Roseville

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Dear Senator Switalski:

As a resident of Roseville, I believe that it is a beautiful and wonderful city to live in. Roseville offers many opportunities for family-orientated activities. It has several clean and well kept-parks for families to enjoy. The Parks and Recreation Department offers many programs for all interests, young and old alike. It is a safe city, where you can take walks, shop at stores and work.

Take a drive down Gratiot and see how busy it is. The Department of Public Works does an excellent job of keeping the grass cut, with flowers and seasonal decorations for all to enjoy. But there is always room for improvement. I recently saw that Utica is a cool city and received a grant. We could use a grant to beautify Roseville even more. A designated downtown area in Roseville, complete with a play area, antique shops, and other exciting specialty stores would bring in younger families and help diversify our city. I also would support the city staging more community-wide events, similar to events such as the annual fireworks display at Memorial Park, so that it would help draw more visitors to Roseville and show others why we have such a great city.

Gail Lozen
Roseville

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Thanks to everyone who responded to my inquiry about cool cities. In my opinion, a cool city is a place where people want to live and hang out in. It is a place that has quality infrastructure and services, which makes a city more user-friendly to its residents and visitors. Quality infrastructure can mean many things to different people but might include parks where people can walk in, a building that attracts people such as an art theater, or it could even be wiring up an internet café or having nice roads and sidewalk. Maybe it includes a safe place to raise a family with adequate police protection. Should government play a role in fostering a more user-friendly destination to attract people? I think government does have a role in attracting developments and creating a place where citizens will want to enjoy their stay. The cool cities initiative is just one of the measures the state provides to help cities and townships improve their communities. Utica was awarded \$15,000 and will use the money to make plans for a revitalized downtown. Mickey

Mickey's Blog: Legislature Considers Changes to Item Pricing Law (Again)

Consumers of the World, unite: You have nothing to lose but your chains, and maybe some money in your pockets by possibly being overcharged at your next trip to the supermarket.

Over the 10,000 years since Neanderthals left the cave, man has erected a complex civilization conducting global commerce according to fair rules of trade instead of piracy and the law of the jungle. There were many hiccups in between and the system continues to have some imperfections.

But don't be fooled as the thin line between order and chaos is only a mismarked box of Fruity Pebbles away. The Michigan House is considering a bill (House Bill 4636) that would eliminate some provisions of Michigan's item pricing law. Supporters of the bill argue that current law is burdensome to retailers and that current technological advances can ensure adequate consumer protections.

I don't buy it and you shouldn't either. In a classic battle of business' versus consumer's interest, I will choose the consumer who drives our economy by purchasing goods and services.

House Bill 4636 would allow retailers to avoid placing a price sticker on many items as long as they have a display above, below or adjacent to a product. The bill would also require retailers to have an electric price checker so that you can check the price of the product. Some of the scanners might even have the ability to print out the price for you. The bill also requires an audit of the price scanners to ensure 98 percent accuracy.

The problem is you will either have to remember the price of the product or carry around a ton of paper slips with the price of your frozen Popsicle sticks and that bottle of wine for that family gathering fast approaching and then match it up with your receipt. I don't know about you but that would be maddening and I would probably misplace some of the slips rendering this point mute.

Michigan's current item pricing law is simple. Items in stores must be individually marked with a price sticker. If an item is scanned at checkout with a higher price, the retailer owes you the difference, plus 10 times the difference up to a maximum of \$5.

Current law makes shopping more convenient, so you know what things cost and don't have to run around checking prices all day. It's a jungle out there and who has the time to check prices and carry around a bunch of slips of paper that lists an item's price in today's hectic schedule. It just isn't

practical and I am not convinced such a change is necessary. The bill would be an inconvenience to customers, and after all customers are the reason why stores are in business.

What do you think? Should the legislature change the item pricing law? Do you prefer keeping the law the same? Is there some sort of compromise that could be reached? Let me know what you think and I will print some of your e-mails in the next issue of the *Insider E-Newsletter*.

Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times
(Comcast Channel 18)

*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

Coffee Hours

*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

**Aug. 1
7-9 p.m.**

Location: Sterling Heights Public Library
(40255 Dodge Park)
Sterling Heights

**September 26
7-9 p.m.**

Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library
(40900 Romeo Plank, south of Canal Road)
Clinton Township

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